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INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (6/18): WILL THE HAMAS - ISRAEL  
TRUCE HOLD?

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Main Stories:  
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The front pages of the three dailies lead with reports about a truce agreement between Hamas and Israel. The papers report that the truce will take effect on the morning of June 19. Al-Quds highlights that the crossing points will reopen for short periods and that, "the siege will be lifted." The same report quotes Hamas leader Mahmud Al-Zahhar stating that all parties approved and praised the agreement before it was announced. The dailies also report that Palestinian Presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudaynah confirmed that Palestinian President Abbas played a major role in the successful conclusion of the truce agreement. Related coverage notes that Washington is waiting for final confirmation of the truce, with Al-Ayyam reporting on American skepticism regarding the news. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida opens with, "Barak thinks it is too early to talk about a cease fire." All dailies remind readers that the Israeli military stands ready to launch a military operation in Gaza should the truce fail. On the ground, papers record the deaths of six Palestinians in a June 17 Israeli air strike on Gaza.

Al-Quds runs an above-the-fold, exclusive interview with Consul General Waller, granted on June 17. The headline highlights Waller's comments that, "the goal of Rice's visit was to deal with the most important issues, and settlements is one of them." A sub-headline further quotes Waller stating that, "the United States does not differentiate between the West Bank and Jerusalem in regards to the settlement issue." The above-the-fold article, continues on two, lengthy columns on an inside page. The report adds little comment to what is essentially a transcription of the interview that touched on U.S. policy regarding Palestinian security training, settlements, Gaza, a possible Hamas-Israel truce and prospects for an agreement this year. The journalist concludes that the Consul General remains

"very optimistic" about the possibility for a Palestinian-Israeli agreement by 2009. In separate reporting, Al-Quds quotes chief Palestinian negotiator Ahmad Quray, stating that, "settlements will kill the peace process, and any efforts towards reaching an agreement."

The June 17 meeting of Palestinian President Abbas and Kuwaiti Prince Al-Sabah in Kuwait is front page news. The two leaders discussed current issues related to Palestinian issues and other issues of common interest in the regional and international arenas, according to all dailies.

Turkish mediated contacts between Israel and Syria are a topic on all front pages. According to the dailies, Syria and Israel are "relaxed" about the progress of negotiations. The papers also highlight that France is pushing for a meeting between Syrian President Al-Asad and Israeli Premier Olmert in Paris at a mid-July conference organized by French President Sarkozy to establish a Mediterranean Union.

Israeli forces seized seven civilians during an overnight raid in the West Bank city of Nablus and surrounding villages on June 17, according to headlines.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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¶1. Independent Al-Quds carries its daily editorial under the title, "East Jerusalem was also occupied in 1967" (6/18): "The logic used

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by Israeli officials when talking about settlements in East Jerusalem is a strange logic that makes no sense, especially when they contrast [E. Jerusalem settlements] to settlements in the West Bank. They claim that they have the right to build settlements in East Jerusalem and that this does not contradict [obligations linked to] peace negotiations. They are also claim that there is no settlement expansion in the West Bank. Yet, the entire international community knows that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the West Bank. It is, in fact, the heart of the West Bank that has been strangled by Israeli authorities and isolated from its Palestinian environment. East Jerusalem was occupied in 1967 like the West Bank and was then absorbed into the Jerusalem municipality a few weeks after the war. This was a unilateral move [by Israel] that has not been recognized by the international community. Even the status of West Jerusalem remains a topic of discussion at the international level. Settlements in Arabic Jerusalem are illegal just as the settlements in the West Bank are..."

¶2. Independent Al-Ayyam runs an op-ed by columnist Hani Habib entitled, "Will there be a truce this time?" (6/18): "Cairo is supposed to mark the zero hour on [June 19] for the beginning of a truce that was agreed upon between Israel and the Hamas movement through Egyptian sponsorship. ... This time Israel might fulfill its pledge, if things go well the first two weeks: No rockets and a comprehensive calm on the borders with Gaza. Two weeks will be the Israeli test for the Hamas movement, according to [Israeli daily] Yidot Ahront, to determine if [Hamas] is serious about... a real truce... We as citizens who do not partake in [the game of] political calculations, know that the truce is a needed step to pave the road toward national Palestinian dialogue."

WALLES